

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1929.02.08

DATE: Friday February 8, 1929

LOCATION: Bondi, New South Wales, Australia. 33°54'S, 151°14'E

NAME: John Gibson

DESCRIPTION: He was a 39-year-old male with "a powerful physique."

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a cloudy, overcast day and the air temperature was 71°F.

MOON PHASE: New Moon, February 10, 1929

SEA CONDITIONS: Water temperature was 72°F.

ENVIRONMENT: There was a large wide channel and sandbank extending from the beach for about 50 or 60 yards before coming into deep water.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 yards

DEPTH: 12 feet

TIME: 16h00



NARRATIVE: Gibson and a friend were swimming together and were seaward of the few people in the water. They had just passed the sandbank when Gibson's friend saw the fin of a shark. Immediately after, Gibson's leg was seized and he was dragged beneath the water. As he surfaced, he "stuck his hands downwards as if to ward of the brute below," said his friend. Help arrived quickly and he was carried to the beach. He was given medical attention and then taken to St. Vincent's Hospital, but he was dead on arrival.

INJURY: Fatal. Hospital records describe the injury: "There was an elliptical lacerated wound on the right thigh, extending from just below the inguinal ligament to about one inch above the knee. The wound measured 15 inches by seven inches. The femur was exposed for about five inches in the middle of the wound. The femoral artery was severed about three inches below the inguinal ligament."

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified

SOURCES: The Canberra Times, Saturday February 9, 1929, page 1; Victor M. Coppleson, N11 (1933); Alan Sharpe, page 62; Jack Green, page 32

VICTIM TO SHARK ATTACK

LEFT LEG TORN OFF

DIES AFTER REACHING HOSPITAL

SYDNEY, Friday.

Another shark tragedy occurred at Bondi late this afternoon.

A man, who has been identified as John Gibson, aged 39, who resides with his wife at Lewis Street, Bondi, was so horribly mangled that he died a few minutes after admission to hospital.

The man was swimming about 30 yards from the shore directly in front of the new surf shed when he suddenly threw up his arms and appeared to be beating the water with his hands. A moment later a trail of blood was seen on the crest of a wave, and other surfers realised that he had been taken by a shark.

The swimmers went to the beach and it was seen that the victim of the shark had been frightfully injured. The monster had torn a huge piece of flesh from his thigh, and had bitten the left leg off above the knee. The man was unconscious, and was losing a considerable amount of blood. An ambulance was immediately summoned, and the injured man conveyed to St. Vincent's Hospital, accompanied by eight members of the surf club, still in their bathing costumes, who were prepared to give their blood if a transfusion was necessary.

The man, however, was in such a low condition when he reached the hospital that it was quickly realised that there was no hope of saving him, and he died in a few minutes.

The man was swimming in about

the same place as Colin Stewart was fatally attacked about a month ago. Amongst those who went to the hospital was Harry Steele, brother of Max Steele, who was taken by a shark at Bondi about eight months ago.

The first to reach the stricken man were Roy Starfield and Sam McDonald, junior, son of the beach inspector, and Hasi Egan. The last-named was surfing within a few yards of where the man was attacked.

He said: "I saw the shark grab the man. It half pulled him under the water, and when he came to the surface again the waves were dyed red." Egan said the shark brushed against him, as he swam towards the injured man, but it disappeared almost immediately, and he did not see it again.

FAMOUS SOLDIER KILLED BY SHARK.

John Gibson, at one time a member of the famous Black Watch, and who received 17 wounds during the war, and who was very wealthy, was killed by a shark at Bondi on Saturday. He was of fine physique and a very handsome man.

Northern Territory Times (Darwin,), Tuesday February 12, 1929, page 4